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**Flying Below the Radar?
Critical Approaches to Adult Educationⁱ**

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Defining adult education is an impossible task. It is such a multivalent and amorphous field, comprising different traditions, that definitions are bound to be exclusive, often deliberately so. Some types of adult education take the form of ‘adult schooling’ and simply provide adults with a ‘second chance’. Other forms of adult education do not extend beyond the narrow remit of adult training and there are also forms of adult education which are run on a purely commercial basis with the market playing an important role here.

There is however an often repressed tradition of adult learning with a broad ‘social purpose’ dimension that extends beyond the restricted domain of welfarism. It often compels its practitioners to fly below the radar for a variety of reasons, depending on context: avoiding surveillance and possible co-optation by the mainstream system; remaining clandestine in those situations marked by extreme repression; keeping close to the grassroots; remaining a subaltern discourse. Rather than simply enable people to adapt to and re-integrate within the system, this type of adult education is intended to empower groups and individuals to confront the system with a view to changing it. It is often referred to as adult education for social transformation – an educational engagement having a strong social justice orientation. It reflects an alternative vision of society. Similarly, much of the writing, in this regard, is about adult education not as it is now, as evinced by mainstream examples of ‘best practice,’ but as it should and can be. This writing often consists of case studies that provide excellent signposts indicating the way forward.

This vision has given rise to forms of adult learning that constitute an important feature of social and political movements struggling for change worldwide. These struggles occur in a variety of contexts. The educational effort involved can easily be identified as a critical approach to adult education which connects with the broader, more encompassing area of critical education.

Prominent in this area of critical education is a group of writers involved in what has come to be referred to as ‘critical pedagogy.’ Focusing on schools, McLaren defined critical pedagogy as being “fundamentally concerned with the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work” (McLaren, 1994, p. 167). This definition would certainly apply to the broader area of critical education and would equally apply to the domain of adult learning, especially of the radical type.

Many key writers connected with a critical approach to education, more generally, have been providing concepts and writings relevant to adult education and the broader domain of adult learning. Take, for example, Henry Giroux’s notion of educators as transformative intellectuals, people who engage in intellectual and cultural activity entailing *praxis*. They also include socially committed adult educators who avail themselves of the flexibility of non-formal adult education settings to work for social change or else operate ‘in and against’ the public adult education system. Giroux’s notion of ‘public pedagogy’ has obvious implications for radical adult education practice that extends beyond formal educational sites to incorporate a variety of sites of adult learning. They must be safeguarded as public spaces against the onslaught of privatisation and commodification. Likewise, Roger Simon’s notion of redemptive or public transactional memory has obvious implications for adult education work which often involves the use of collective and public memory, for example, among older adults or in community learning. Michael W. Apple’s concept of ‘Official Knowledge’ has implications for the many sites of practice where selections

from the many cultures of society are made. This notion has been taken up in the context of Museum adult education as cultural politics (Borg and Mayo, 2000). Like the curriculum, the museum, as a vehicle for learning (see Chadwick and Stannett, 2000), can also be conceived of as a site of cultural struggle, selecting material from the cultures of society and according it a sense of legitimacy, as with ‘official knowledge’ in the curriculum.

Antonia Darder produced work on critical bilingual/bicultural education (Darder, 1991), foregrounding subaltern voices, and anti-racist education. These works provide inspiration for adult educators working in and seeking to engage critically with a variety of areas. These would range from language programmes (e.g. TESOL programmes) among immigrants, to all types of community oriented adult education programmes in which educators seek to address different power relationships and class-race intersections. She is one of a number of writers who have written a book length study on Paulo Freire. Darder combines philosophical discussion with the voices of educators operating in different teaching/learning contexts and settings (Darder, 2002).

Paulo Freire is the key figure whose influence is strongly felt in the critical education field. He enjoys iconic status among critical educators and especially critical adult educators given his approach to critical literacy which originated with his adult education work in Angicos and was also consolidated during his consultancy work with revolutionary governments in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa and in Nicaragua and Grenada. It was further consolidated during his work as Education Secretary in the Municipal Government in São Paulo, Brazil, where, in addition to carrying out school reforms, he and the rest of the Education Secretariat engaged in a partnership with social movements in organizing an important literacy campaign among youth and adults called MOVA São Paulo (Stromquist, 1997). Freire’s focus on ‘reading the word and the world’ as well as his rendering the concept of *praxis* the central element in his pedagogical

approach and educational philosophy makes him the most heralded critical popular educator of the 20th century and an obvious source of influence in the area of critical education. The organisations in adult education that draw inspiration from Freire are too numerous to mention. Suffice to mention the various Paulo Freire Institutes established throughout the world, with the main institute in Sao Paulo, Brazil. If one takes Europe as an example, one can mention organisations such as CREA (Centre for Social and Educational Research) in Barcelona, led by an important critical pedagogue and sociologist, Ramon Flecha (2000). Among its many activities, CREA carried out literacy circles among different types of workers lacking a formal education. Spain is also home to another important critical adult education centre, CREC that is closely connected to the Paulo Freire Institute in Spain. A journal called *Quaderns d' Educació Continua* and several books in the critical pedagogy field, a number written by or focusing on the work of Paulo Freire, feature among the resources, provided by CREC, that are distributed among popular educators working in the Valencia region.

Freire's concept of authentic dialogue, with its implications for a participatory and non dominative approach to learning, where everyone involved performs the functions of educator and learner, without in any way diminishing the distinction between the recognised educator and students, invites parallels with the ideas of such other important educators as Martin Buber (a writer and organizer of adult education classes in Palestine and subsequently Israel) and German social theorist Jürgen Habermas. The latter is well known for his theory of communicative action and conception of the ideal speech situation. Habermas' advocacy of the use of critical reasoning against the colonization of the lifeworld (Finger, 2005, p. 167) by the system world, and his articulation of civil society and the public sphere, appealed to adult educators (see Welton, 2001; Wain, 2004). Habermas is an important source of influence in critical education more generally.

He belongs to the second wave of the Frankfurt School, the Institute for Social Research, whose key scholars are also very influential in critical education circles and certainly among exponents of critical pedagogy. The critical theory tradition is also engaged, in the adult education literature, by Stephen D. Brookfield (2005) who broadens the theoretical framework to include a host of writers, apart from Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Marcuse and Habermas. Habermas' influence in adult education can at best be felt in Brookfield's work and that of Jack Mezirow. They both combined "critical thinking with pragmatism" (Finger, 2005, p. 167). In his elaboration of an epistemology of transformative learning in adult education, Mezirow (2003) recognizes the validity of Habermas' distinction between instrumental and communicative learning, and the concept of emancipatory learning (p.59-61).

Raymond A. Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres, who have also written extensively on critical education and on popular education in Latin America, have provided a detailed book length comparative study of Freire and Habermas, within the context of critical pedagogy and transformative social change. They underline, among other things, the critical social psychology which lies at the heart of Freire's and Habermas' conceptions of the dialogical social subject and of individual and collective learning. These conceptions suggest "strategies for rethinking the relations between education and transformative change." (Morrow and Torres, 2002, pp. 14-15).

Freire lends himself to comparative studies involving other key figures in education and social theory for the purpose of a critical approach to education. John Dewey, Ivan Illich, Ettore Gelpi, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci and Lorenzo Milani feature among those whose writings are compared to or are given extended reference alongside Freire's.

It is interesting to see Freire's work, in the literature, often associated with that of Michel Foucault, an important source of influence in the critical education literature. Of particular concern

is Foucault's discussion and exploration of the relationship of power and knowledge, the two being interconnected and serving to develop technologies of power. Equally of interest is Foucault's conception of power as being not necessarily negative but productive, and as being diffuse and capable of being resisted even though the resistance involved is never external to power itself. Quite influential is his related work on moral regulation, his concept of governmentality (Olssen, 2006) and his view of history as being non-evolutionary and interrupted. There are also his adoption of the Nietzschean concept of genealogy, his excavation of subjugated histories and knowledge and his notion of the specific intellectual operating in specific contexts.

One of the most prominent authors to draw on Foucault when writing from a postmodern perspective is the British sociologist, Sallie Westwood who, for several years, was a prominent contributor to the critical adult education literature. Westwood's own use of the French post-structuralist's ideas is best exemplified in a piece dealing with the politics of transformative research, a very important approach to research in connection with what is often referred to, in the critical tradition of adult education, as transformative adult education. The piece reports on research carried out among mentally-ill black patients. It seeks to shed light on their subjugated knowledge. This knowledge emerges through narratives that indicate the way the patients make sense of their world and their pain as opposed to the kind of 'scientific knowledge' deployed as a result of the "interviewee being a case." (Westwood, 1992)

Mark Olssen draws on Foucault's notion of "governmentality" and lectures on Neoliberalism for an understanding of learning and education and how educational and economic practices mutually condition and adapt to each other. In this regard, he explores the all pervasive notion of lifelong learning, with its Neoliberal underpinning, to see how it can serve alternative ends. Olssen argues in favour of an emancipatory project based on social justice and deliberative

democracy. This position differs considerably from that frequently expressed by Foucault regarding 'emancipation' and 'social justice'. In an earlier piece, Olssen (2003) provides a Foucauldian post-structural reading of Neoliberalism. Foucault's impact can also be found in works concerned with learning and work (e.g. Edwards and Nicoll, 2004), learning and old age (Carroll, 2007) and numerous works concerned with women's adult education. Quite significant is the work of Leona English (2006) who has been using the lens of Foucauldian post-structuralisms to understand the intersection of knowledge, power and discourse in feminism(s), in the non-profit world and in the academy. She has studied, in particular, the way in which power is dispersed and negotiated in women's non-profit organizations, especially feminist organizations, the learning that takes place within them and their relations with government policy makers.

The emphasis in Foucault on power/knowledge brings to mind another important European theorist whose work continues to exert a tremendous influence on critical education, including critical adult education: Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci is well known for his elaboration of the concept of hegemony, of which he never provides a systematic exposition. Hegemony emerged as a powerful conceptual tool to analyse the relationship between power and knowledge. Gramsci has been influential in a variety of areas, within the domain of critical adult education, including: the conceptualization of socially and politically committed adult educators as 'organic intellectuals' - this concept has been adopted in the Christian Base Communities in Latin America (La Belle, 1986; Kane, 2001) and has been taken up by contemporary critical theorists of adult education (Brookfield, 2005); the use of 'conjunctural analysis' in the theory and practice of popular education in Latin America and such countries as Canada (Barndt, 1989); the theoretical and empirical analysis of workers' education in light of the Factory Council Theory (Livingstone, 2002); the analysis of adult education and the State (Torres, 1990); adult education intended to

enable people to gain control over their own lives - Gramsci's elaboration of and formulations with respect to hegemony are most relevant here (Newman, 2006); the area of adult education and cultural studies, since Gramsci exerted a strong influence on this area (see Raymond Williams, in McIlroy and Westwood, 1993).

Gramsci is a revered figure in that area of non-formal education in Latin America known as popular education (e.g. La Belle, 1986; Torres, 1990; Kane, 2002), a kind of educational practice which takes many forms but which continues to be theorised from a critical, emancipatory perspective. It is particularly in this context that his work is strongly combined with that of Paulo Freire, the two being given iconic status (Allman, 1999; Mayo, 1999; Ledwith, 2005). Gramsci however is a key figure in an important aspect of the radical and critical debate on adult education, namely the debate involving a Marxist approach to adult learning. As with critical education in general, Marxist writings and practice have played a key role in the conceptualisation of critical adult education.

This influence is particularly strong in the context of independent working class education as well as in certain aspects of workers' education, notably the more radical aspects as manifest, for example, in the work of the Plebs league and the Labour colleges in Britain (see Simon, 1992). They represented an attempt at creating a break with bourgeois culture. Independent working class education manifested itself through classes and schools, workmen's colleges, alternative libraries and sporting events. One finds examples of these in places such as England (McIlroy, 1992), Germany, Australia (Sharp et al, 1989), Italy and Cyprus (see Panayiotou, 2006).

The literature on critical adult education abounds with writings from a Marxist perspective with Youngman (1986) providing one of the finest studies in the area that includes a brilliant second chapter focusing on 'Marxism and Learning.' In this book, Youngman identifies some of

the basic principles of a socialist approach to adult education and uses these principles to examine the work of Paulo Freire, the main problem being that he runs the risk of de-contextualising and therefore abstracting concepts. Two theorists who provide book length works on a Marxist approach to adult education are Paula Allman (e.g. Allman, 1999) and John Holst (2001), the former rooting her work in a thorough exposition and analysis of Karl Marx's own writings and the latter drawing on Marx and other Marxist writings in his analysis of contemporary conceptions of civil society, the State and social movements. In both cases, the influence of Gramsci is strongly felt. These works are part of a steady stream of historical materialist writings in critical education, with Peter McLaren featuring prominently among the authors involved.

McLaren's work highlights a revolutionary aspect of adult education (McLaren, 2000), namely the kind of non-formal education which occurs within guerrilla movements, as outlined earlier, in the mid-eighties, by Thomas La Belle (1986) in his analysis of Nonformal education in Latin America and the Caribbean. McLaren focuses on Ernesto Che Guevara, a revolutionary figure, often shown in photos to be engaged in adult education with guerrillas. McLaren uses Che's image to discuss revolutionary learning within the context of contemporary guerrilla movements, notably the Frente Zapatista in Chiapas. The issue of learning in revolutionary contexts brings to mind some of the most important literature on adult education documenting what went on in revolutionary settings in countries such as Nicaragua in the 80s (e.g. Arnove, 1994; Barndt, 1991) and Grenada (e.g. Jules, 1993). Concepts relating to popular education in these revolutionary contexts, and also in milder post-dictatorial contexts, can enable those committed to a critical approach to adult education to think of radically alternative ways of confronting educational challenges and issues.

One of the major challenges facing critical adult educators writing from a Marxist and non-Marxist perspective, or who engage the Marxist tradition, is that posed by Neoliberalism which provides the ideological underpinning to the intensification of globalisation. This challenge constitutes one of the recurring themes in much of the literature on adult education from a critical perspective, as we have seen from the earlier reference to one of Olssen's papers. Foley (1999) is one of the most prominent authors to have broached this theme in his writings on capitalist reorganization, drawing once again on a political economy approach. A compendium of essays edited by Shirley Walters (1997), from the University of Western Cape, with articles by a variety of writers including Ove Korsgaard, Michael Welton and Judith Marshall, tackled the issue of the globalisation of adult education and training from a critical perspective. Paulo Freire himself was on the verge of writing a book on Neoliberalism at the time of his death and engaged in several critiques of the effects of this ideology on social programmes and education in his later works, analyzing it against the backdrop of the 'ideology of ideological death.' The OECD's and European Union's distortion of the former humanist, albeit liberal, UNESCO concepts of lifelong education and the learning society, through their advocacy of lifelong learning, and placing the onus on the individual's personal investment in learning rather than on the State to provide adequate structures for learning, became the target of much criticism. This criticism is often levelled at these institutions because of the Neoliberal tenets that underlie the more recent use of this concept as well as that of the 'learning society.' Mark Murphy (1997) was among the first to provide such a scathing critique of the EU policies in this regard. John Field (2001) provided a very revealing genealogy of lifelong education/learning and some astute formulations with regard to its pitfalls and possibilities. Other critiques of the way these concepts are now used in the dominant discourse derive from Ettore Gelpi himself, one of the more radical 'second wave'

writers on Lifelong Education, Kenneth Wain (2004), Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo (2006), Peter Jarvis (2006) and even Zygmunt Bauman. Bauman (2007, pp.121-126) makes a great contribution to the critical literature on lifelong learning, including adult learning, through his critique of the EU's lifelong learning programmes and the narrow concept of citizenship they promote.

Other radical adult educators have taken up this theme as well as the related one of people taking control over their own lives. These include the Australian adult educator Michael Newman. In a number of his works, especially *Defining the Enemy* (Newman, 1994, 2002, 2007), Newman tackles one of the major challenges facing organizations in this age of trans-national corporations and ever increasing mystifications of structures of oppression. Of course *Defining the Enemy* is written in a manner that helps people to identify oppressors of various types, through programmes of adult education with women, aboriginals, workers in trade union settings etc. Newman's books provide a clarion call to social action which, according to the author, should lie at the heart of any genuine engagement in adult education. He writes lucidly and shuttles from theoretical rumination to practical advice and documentation using vignettes from every day life, each providing an evocative account from daily encounters that serves to illustrate some deeper political and philosophical point. The same applies to his later book (Newman, 2006) which, once again, makes the quest for social justice its main purpose. It is about teaching for defiance but this defiance is not a simple manifestation of petulance or opposition for its own sake but a carefully thought out action born out of anger and a consideration of one's developed personal morality. The book once again combines theoretical rumination with practical tools including role play, group work, negotiation strategies and forum theatre (a la` Boal), the last mentioned being a very important and

increasingly popular form of critical engagement and learning within community contexts in different parts of the world.

Vignettes and story telling are powerful instruments for a critical approach to education, as Newman reveals. This brings to mind, once again, the work of his colleague, Griff Foley (1999). It focuses on learning in social action, owing to the presence of non-formal and informal education in the adult education field. Foley provides us with case studies representing instances of learning through action at the local level (drawn from Brazil, Australia and Zimbabwe) and these are preceded by three chapters, looking at issues at the macro-level, which provide a theoretical framework for analysis. The case studies indicate pockets of resistance to capitalism in its various guises and are characterised by intersections between class issues and issues related to other forms of oppression (white imperialism in the case of Zimbabwe, multinationals in the case of Brazil, environmental degradation in the case of the Terrania Creek campaign in Australia).

Griff Foley raises the issue of learning in social movements, a key area for adopting a critical pedagogical approach to adult education. Social movements are often viewed as sites of adult learning in themselves and as providing the context for adult education work (e.g. Welton, 1993; Hall and Clover, 2006) within organizations connected to the movement. Others refer to adult education as a social movement in itself. One of the oldest movements involved in adult education is undoubtedly the Labour Movement whose work comprises trade union education (tool and issue courses) and workers' education more generally (e.g. B. Simon, 1992; Livingstone, 2002; Spencer, 1995; McIlroy, 1993; Baldacchino, 1997; Fisher, 2005). There is also the area of adult learning in the cooperative movement (Baldacchino, 1990; Quarter, 2000). The issues of adult education and women strongly make their presence felt in the context of social movements (e.g. Barr, 1999; Butterwick, 1998; Cunningham, 1992; Hart, 1992; Ledwith, 2005; Miles, 1998;

Thompson, 1983). The same applies to issues concerning adult education and sexual orientation (Grace and Hill, 2004; Hill, 1996; Schedler, 1996), related to the conception of gender in its broader context, and issues concerning adult education and biodiversity (e.g. Hart, 1992; Clover, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1999). Less visible is literature on adult education and the disability movement (see, for example, Petrie and Shaw, 1999; Clark, 2006). The anti-racist and anti-ethnic prejudice movements make their presence directly felt in the adult education literature (Arshad, 1999; Kelly and Maan, 1999). There are also issues related to adult learning for grassroots democracy (omnicrazia) and here one ought to mention the work of the Italian Aldo Capitini, the anti-fascist peace educator and activist who organized various educational and mobilizing activities within the context of a peace education movement and his post-war centres for social orientation (COS).

Adult education often takes place within the context of religious movements both in Northern and Southern contexts. Religious movements can be conservative and downright reactionary but they can also be very progressive with a strong radical social justice orientation. Examples are provided by the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, which has provided the context for some of the most socially progressive popular education; the Antigonish movement in Nova Scotia, Canada with key figures such as Moses Coady and Jimmy Tompkins (e.g. Lotz and Welton, 1997); the *Cattolici di Sinistra* (Catholics on the Left) movement in Italy drawing inspiration from radical educators such as Don Lorenzo Milani (e.g. Borg and Mayo, 2006). As the literature on these figures and the movements they inspired show, there is enough material in the documented ideas and actions to inspire a critical and socially committed approach to adult education.

There is also critical adult learning and education occurring within the context of landless peasant movements, particularly Brazil's *Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* -MST

(Kane, 2002), and NGOs, including feminist NGOs (e.g. Stromquist, 2007), in majority world contexts. There are movements of NGOs, in these contexts, that conceive of an alternative development paradigm. The writings of Rajesh Tandon reflect in many ways the strong tradition of grassroots and often anti-colonial and ecologically sensitive organising that exists in India (Tandon, 2000a & b). One ought also to mention in this regard the mobilisation of the tree hugging (Chipko) movement inspired by Mira Behn, as well as the Sarvodaya movement (Zachariah, 1986). Here the figure of Gandhi (Kapoor, 2003) looms large.

Some of the literature promotes the idea of progressive social movements serving as an alternative to Leftist parties, given the perceived growing disenchantment with the latter. Other literature criticizes the romanticisation of social movements and ‘civil society’ more generally, presenting them as some kind of a *deus ex machina* in light of the perceived demise of the left as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall and ‘actually existing socialism.’ Is there room for critical adult education to occur as a result of collaboration between progressive movements and say political parties?

This discussion on social movements provided due recognition to voices from the majority world. These voices often foreground issues related to anti or postcolonialism as well as questions concerning indigenous knowledge. The speeches and writings of Julius Kambarage Nyerere (e.g. Nyerere, 1979), with regard to adult education in Tanzania, made an important contribution to critical postcolonial adult education. Embedded in his approach to the development of adult education in the East African context is a logic that runs counter to that of traditional colonial education. The intention was to Africanize African education. This brings to mind a similar term, ‘to Grenadize Grenadians’, adopted in Grenada by the New Jewel Movement, that best captures the spirit characterizing a change in approach with respect to the previous colonial education, as is

well explained by Anne Hickling Hudson (1999) who has contributed to the literature on adult education from a postcolonial perspective. The emphasis, through such notions as the africanization of African education and ways of knowing, is placed on the valorisation of indigenous knowledge. Revolutionary and post-independence governments emphasized this kind of knowledge in reaction to the ‘top down’ education provided before the change in political climate took place. Cuba, Tanzania, Nicaragua, Grenada, the Seychelles, Guinea Bissau and Eritrea are among the contexts that feature prominently in the relevant literature. There is a growing literature affirming the importance of indigenous, including ancestral and spiritual, knowledge in the education and postcolonial fields, including literature by authors who have been associated with adult education (e.g. Dei, Hall and Rosenberg, 2000).

While on the subject of subaltern forms of knowledge, it would be worth mentioning, in a chapter such as this, the importance of grassroots based research processes that challenge and serve as a radical alternative to the more conventional and authoritative scientific forms of knowledge. One of the major challenges, in my view, derives from what is known as Participatory Action Research, which has figured in the literature. It constitutes a form of research that is grassroots oriented, focuses on community problems and issues perceived by the community members to be directly affecting their lives and is carried out by the community members themselves. This approach has strong connections with popular education certainly of the type popularised by Paulo Freire. The ‘Third World’ and ‘Southern’ orientation of all these elements probably explains the convergence of the adopted approaches. People are gathering and producing knowledge at the same time, often experiencing, in the process, what Jack Mezirow would call a ‘perspective transformation.’

Needless to say there has been much debate with regard to its credibility as an approach to research (Latapi`, 1988) but then such debates occur with respect to any form of learning and research that falls outside the mainstream. It would occur with all sorts of research and knowledge *by, from* and *about* people on the margins. Like indigenous knowledge PAR challenges received wisdom and constituted authority.

Dominant and exclusionary forms of knowledge promote and attempt to consolidate restricted and therefore equally exclusionary forms of citizenship. These forms of citizenship have been contested in the past and continue to be contested at present. For the area of citizenship is very much a contested terrain. Ethnic minorities contest dominant forms of modernity and citizenship, as in the case of the Kurds in Turkey with respect to the legacy of Ataturk (Mustapha Kemal). The dominant Neoliberal form of citizenship promoted globally is that of the citizen being a largely two-dimensional person, consumer and producer. The critical education literature promotes the broader concept of citizenship, that of persons as social actors (Williamson, 1998; Martin, 2001), exercising their ‘right to govern,’ as with Lorenzo Milani’s writings.

Myles Horton would be one of the key figures in this area of adult learning for critical citizenship. His work, with respect to the mining community in Wilder, the civil rights movement and the citizenship schools is documented in a variety of papers (e.g Peters and Bell, 1987) and books (e.g. Horton and Freire, 1990). The conversation involving Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990) and his splendid autobiography attest to a life dedicated to the struggle for social justice and the empowerment of oppressed groups. The Horton-Freire book virtually represents Myles Horton's last testament with respect to his ideas concerning adult education and social change. It constitutes a fitting tribute to him. Although Freire undoubtedly makes his presence felt throughout

the conversation, it is Horton who takes up most of the space, encouraged, in this regard, by the third anonymous participant who, at times, makes special efforts to bring the best out of him.

The issue of adult learning and citizenship also brings into sharp focus writings in connection with the participatory budget (PB) experience in deliberative democracy in Porto Alegre (e.g. Schugurensky, 2002). Daniel Schugurensky, a key author in the area of adult education and citizenship, states, with respect to the Participatory Budget, that while many “local planners, city officials, community organizers and participants do not perceive the pedagogical potential of participatory democracy”, a number of “active participants” in the Porto Alegre project “understand the Participatory Budget as an educational space,” often referring to it as a “citizenship school” (Schugurensky, 2002, p.72).

The connection between communities and participation is a recurring theme, in most of the critical adult education literature, especially that literature dealing with community development. Community action, learning and development together constitute a contested terrain. It has become fashionable to invoke communities in these times. This invocation can accommodate the current Neo-liberal discourse that places the emphasis for prosperity on individuals, groups and communities rather than on the State. The State thus continues to abdicate its responsibilities in consolidating public goods and adopting equity measures. This is all part of a strategy to reduce public spending on education and other social services, while privatization and the role of NGOs are increased. The blame for failure is also placed squarely on individuals, communities and groups.

Happily however there is a literature which exposes community activists and workers to critical approaches to community learning, action and development. This literature draws heavily on the best critical traditions of popular education and the writings of theorists such as Gramsci,

Freire, Alinsky and people connected with social movements. The works of Tom Lovett (1978), Marjorie Mayo (1997) and Margaret Ledwith (2005) are quite prominent in this critical tradition, together with work in connection with the Adult Learning Project (a reinvention of Freire's work) in Edinburgh (Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1989).

Ledwith (2005), for instance, seeks to map out a strategy for radical community development that combines cultural and political economic analysis. It is an approach to community development that aspires to be transformative rather than ameliorative in nature. Ledwith combines sophisticated theoretical analysis, especially with regard to the work of Gramsci, Freire and feminist politics, with reflections on a specific site of practice, Hattersley, where the author had been engaged for several years in community organizing and development.

She advocates a holistic and 'glocal' radical approach to community development, one that calls for an articulation of efforts carried out at the local level with those of larger and congenial movements operating at the global level. The emphasis is on praxis derived from material and ecological concerns and which comprises the important areas of experience and feeling. Emphasis is here placed on the promotion of life-centred rather than simply market-oriented values. This book also makes a contribution to the current discussion concerning the recuperation and reconstruction of public spaces. These spaces, on the one hand, often fall into decay. On the other, they are often the target of corporatist commodification and encroachment.

This type of literature, as with most of the literature on adult education referred to above, has a strong emancipatory element, the most prominent feature of many critical approaches to adult education. Theoretical discussions on the postmodern condition also make their presence felt in the critical literature on adult education, with the emphasis placed, among other things, on avoiding unitary subjects and grand narratives, and underlining the limits of the enlightenment

project. (e.g. Usher and Edwards, 1994). Some of the contributors to this literature still manage to retain an emancipatory dimension in their view of adult education, while making us rethink some of the popular concepts and narratives that were probably taken on board uncritically in the past. There are also those, however, who exhibit some of the most ‘clever’ but nihilistic and paralyzing features of ludic postmodernism. For the theoretical debates that characterize the domain of critical approaches to adult education reflect many of the debates that have featured in the humanities and social sciences at large. It remains to be seen, however, which of the currents that are strongly felt in these debates are having the greatest impact at the level of grassroots adult education practice.

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